

NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
318 South Sixth Street
Springfield, IL 62701
Tel: 217/492-4450

RODGER A. HEATON
U.S. ATTORNEY
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS



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Contact: Gerard A. Brost
Assistant U.S. Attorney
(309) 671-7050

East Peoria Man Charged with Tax Evasion

Peoria, IL – Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that a federal grand jury has returned an indictment charging an East Peoria, Illinois man with tax evasion and failing to file a tax return for three tax years. According to court documents, Robert Lawrence, of East Peoria, Illinois, who was employed full time for Mitsubishi Motors in Normal, Illinois, failed to file or pay income taxes for tax years 1999, 2000, and 2001.

The indictment alleges Lawrence submitted false W-4 forms to his employer for three tax years. The employee's withholding certificate, known as a W-4 Form, is used by an employer to determine the appropriate amount of federal income taxes to withhold from an employee's wages. Lawrence allegedly claimed that he held the position of Regional Director of JoY Foundation, a Florida-based organization that claimed the payment of federal income taxes was voluntary. For a fee, the JoY Foundation provided its members with materials and strategies they could use to claim they were exempt from paying federal income taxes. Lawrence allegedly submitted to Mitsubishi false W-4 forms in which he represented that his income was exempt from federal income tax and that no federal taxes should be withheld from his earnings.

According to the indictment, Lawrence received taxable income of approximately \$51,679 in 1999; \$52,680 in 2000; and, \$71,340 in 2001. For those tax years, the indictment alleges Lawrence failed to pay federal income taxes totaling approximately \$10,275 for 1999; \$11,927 for 2000; and \$9,453 for 2001.

The charges are the result of an investigation by the Criminal Investigation Division of the Internal Revenue Service. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Gerard A. Brost.

If convicted, the maximum statutory penalty for tax evasion is five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000; for failure to file a tax return, each count carries a statutory penalty of up to one year in prison and a fine up to \$100,000.

The Clerk of the U.S. District Court will issue a summons for Lawrence to appear in federal court in Peoria.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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